



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# HOW TO OBTAIN A PERMIT FOR A Retaining Wall/Fence

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-4153  
Call (619) 446-5300 for appointments and (619) 446-5000 for information.

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN

**220**

December 2005

This Information Bulletin describes the procedures for obtaining a permit to build a retaining wall or fence when using City of San Diego standard drawings for specifications.

## I. WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

Retaining walls require permits when:

1. The wall is over three feet in height, measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall; or
2. The wall is supporting a surcharge or impounding flammable liquids.

Examples of surcharges are: driveways, walk ways, structure footings, etc.

Fences require permits if they are over six feet in height from grade level on either side to top of fence. The cap installed on a masonry fence is not counted in the height measurement.

## II. OPTION FOR SERVICE

For more efficient service, appointments are available for plans simple enough to be reviewed over-the-counter. To qualify for over-the-counter plan review, retaining walls or fences must be built to the specifications described in:

1. "Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Level Backfill," Information Bulletin 221.
2. "Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Sloping Backfill," Information Bulletin 222.
3. "Tennis Court Fence/Chain link," San Diego Regional Standard Drawing M-17.

Appointments may be scheduled at the Development Services Center, 1222 First Avenue, or by phone at (619) 446-5300.

## III. FORMS TO COMPLETE - DRAWINGS TO INCLUDE

For over-the-counter plan check the following items must be supplied:

### A. Plot Plan

Three copies of a plot plan are required. Refer to Information Bulletin 122, "How to Prepare a Single Family Residential Plot Plan and Vicinity Map," for instructions.

Along with the items listed on the typical plot plan, plans for retaining walls and fences must clearly show:

1. Location of the wall or fence on the property. All parts of the wall or fence, including the footing must be located on private property owned by

## Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- General Application, DS-3032
- Parcel Information Checklist DS-302
- Information Bulletin 501, Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures
- Information Bulletin 117, Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension
- Information Bulletin 122, How to Prepare a Single Family Residential Plot Plan and Vicinity Map
- Information Bulletin 221, Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Level Backfill
- Information Bulletin 222, Minimum Requirements for Retaining Wall/Sloping Backfill

the individual listed as the property owner on the permit application. If the wall or fence is at the front of the property a "curb-to-property line" verification card must be presented with the permit application. Cards are available from the Records Section, 1222 First Avenue, (619) 446-5200.

2. Dimensions of the wall or fence, including length and height of wall or fence (measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall).
3. Distance from the wall or fence footing to all adjacent structures, embankments and property lines.

### B. Wall or Fence Plan

Provide two copies of the Information Bulletin that describes the wall or fence that you intend to build, (as noted in the box above). You must mark on the bulletin the specifications, such as height, rebar, footing size, etc., that you intend to use.

If a retaining wall is located on a slope you must provide a section view sketch showing the slope, the retaining wall location, the depth of the footing, the wall height, and the requisite 7-foot distance from the toe of the footing to the slope.

### C. General Application

A fully completed General Application (DS-3032) is necessary for permit issuance. Refer to the back of the application for instructions on completing the application. Important: There are *no* exceptions to the workers' compensation insurance instructions.

**D. Parcel Information Checklist (DS-302)**

The information contained on this form will assist you as you design your project. A completed Parcel Information Checklist is required for every project.

**E. DOSH Permit/Waiver**

If site work creates soil cuts or trenches five feet deep or more, a permit may be required from the State of California Department of Occupational Safety and Health, phone (619) 767-2280. Either the permit or a waiver must be presented at the time you obtain your building permit.

**IV. THE PLAN CHECK PROCESS**

Staff will make every effort to approve the plans during the first plan review.

All proposed retaining walls and fences must comply with the Land Development Code of the City of San Diego. At the time of your appointment the zoning on the construction site will be determined. You will be advised of any zoning requirements at that time. If you wish to determine the requirements ahead of time, you may schedule an appointment for DPI by calling (619) 446-5300, call us at (619) 446-5000, contact us through our web site, or write us at the address listed on page 1 of this information bulletin.

**V. FEES**

Plan check fees are paid at initial plan check. Permit fees are paid at permit issuance. For the amount due, refer to Information Bulletin 501, "Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures".

**VI. WHEN THE PERMIT IS ISSUED**

You will receive one set of your plans with all approval stamps on it. This set of plans must be available at inspection. You will receive an Inspection Record Card for the inspector's signature as construction is approved.

The required inspections for retaining walls are detailed in Information Bulletins 221 and 222 (one of which will be attached to your plans).

The required inspections for fences are for footings before the concrete is poured and a final inspection when all work is completed.

Permits are active for 180 days and extend for an additional 180 days each time an inspection is passed. For information regarding permit expiration and extension see Information Bulletin 117, "Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension."